

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached substitute drawings include an amendment in Figure 1 wherein reference numeral 52 now has lead lines pointing to the sides of the teeth.

REMARKS

The Office Action dated April 6, 2007 has been reviewed and the application is amended in a manner believed to place same in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

In summary, Claims 10-24 have been amended and Claims 25-30 have been added. Claims 1-9 were previously cancelled. Applicants note that Claims 14, 22 and 24 were indicated as being allowable.

The objections to the drawings have been considered. In Figure 1, the lead lines for reference character 52 now point to the sides of two different teeth. Thus, reference character 52 clearly differs from reference character 54 which labels an inner edge of the gripping ring.

The reference character 45 in Figure 2 is objected to as not including a leader line. Reference character 45 is underlined in Figure 2 to indicate the inner sleeve 45. Underlining of a reference character is proper as set forth in 37 CFR §1.84(q).

For the above reasons, approval of the attached substitute drawings is respectfully requested.

The objections to the specification and claims set forth in paragraphs 4-7 of the Office Action have been considered. The substitute specification provides the amendments and headings requested in the Office Action. Further, the amended claims include proper line spacing. Finally, the amendments include reference numerals added where applicable and address other informalities therein. Approval of the substitute specification is respectfully requested.

The objections to the claims in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Office Action have been considered. Claims 10 and 15 have been amended to address the Examiner's specific objections. Therefore, withdrawal of the objections to Claims 10 and 15 is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 14, 15 and 22-24 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite has been considered.

Claim 14 has been amended to recite reinforcing member flanges along the longitudinal edges of the web portion to more clearly define the location of the nuts.

In Claims 15, 23 and 24, the claims now recite that tightening of the bolts causes the tubular casing to apply radially compressive forces to the sealing sleeve and the gripping rings, which are located within the casing.

Claim 22 has been amended in the manner discussed above with respect to Claim 14.

For the above reasons, Claims 14, 15 and 22-24 are believed definite and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 USC §112, second paragraph is respectfully requested.

Claims 10, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as anticipated by Straub, U.S. Patent No. 5 273 322.

Straub discloses a pipe coupling having a sealing sleeve 32 within a contractible housing 10. The housing is formed with a longitudinal gap at the top of the tube and includes a closure 46 having clamping tongues 48 welded onto the housing and clamping bars 50 of U-shaped cross section enclosed by the clamping tongues as discussed at column 3, lines 6-15 of Straub.

In Straub, the closure 46 is formed by free ends of the tubular housing casing 12 that form loops. The free ends, however, are secured to the housing 10 as disclosed at column 3, lines 6-8. Therefore, there are no free ends for the closure 46 defined by the clamping tongue 48. Further, the clamping bar 50 is a separate element from the clamping tongue 48 and not a part of a strip of metal formed into a tube and having free ends as recited in Claim 10.

Applicants' Claim 10 further recites the "tensioning means interconnecting the free ends of the strip". This feature is illustrated in Applicants' Figure 3 wherein the

free ends of the strip 15, 16 are interconnected through the bolt arrangement. As discussed above, in Straub the closure 46 acting as a strip is folded over and secured at each end to the housing casing 12. Therefore, Straub does not disclose a strip with a free end, much less tensioning means interconnecting the free ends of a strip.

Applicants' Claim 10 further recites a reinforcing member flange extending along the longitudinal edge of the web portion and the reinforcing member flange bearing against the tubular portion of the casing. In Figure 1 of Straub, the clamping bar 50 has open ends that appear to contact the closure 46. The lower end of the bar 50 does not appear to contact any portion of the casing.

Applicants' Claim 19 now recites that the outer ends of the radially projecting flanges are bent back to form "planar stiffening flanges" along the longitudinal outer edges of the radially projecting flanges. This arrangement is not believed present in Straub.

For the above reasons, Claims 10, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 20 are believed allowable over Straub, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the instant rejection is accordingly requested.

Claims 12, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 23 stand rejected under 35 USC §103 as unpatentable over Straub in view of Schreiter, U.S. Patent No. 6 206 434.

Claims 12, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 23 are believed allowable for the reasons set forth above with respect to Claim 10.

Schreiter is relied on for the teaching of two sets of tensioning means (nuts and bolts), rather than a single nut and bolt arrangement. At this time, Applicants do not challenge the concept of providing a pair of bolts and nuts, rather than a single bolt and nut.

Claim 12 recites that the web portion is in "surface-to-surface" contact with a planar surface of the radially projecting flange. In Straub, the clamping bar 50 only has ends that contact the closure and thus there is no web portion

in surface-to-surface contact with a planar surface of the radially projecting flange.

For the above reasons, Claims 12, 13, 15, 18, 21 and 23 are believed allowable over Straub in view of Schreiter, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the instant rejection is accordingly requested.

Added Claims 25-30 are believed allowable over the prior art of record. Independent Claim 25 recites the pipe coupling including a tubular casing comprising a strip of metal formed into a tube with a gap extending longitudinally of the casing between free ends of the strip. The free ends of the strip are bent outwardly to form opposing radially outwardly projecting flanges that extend longitudinally outwardly on opposite sides of a gap.

Claim 25 further recites a tensioning arrangement for "interconnecting the free ends of the opposing radially outwardly projecting flanges". In Figure 1 of Straub, there is not a free end for the closure 46. In Figure 2 of Straub, clamping tongue 48 appears to be secured to the housing casing 12. Thus, the applied prior art does not disclose the radially outwardly projecting flanges having free ends, much less interconnecting the free ends with a tensioning arrangement.

Dependent Claim 26 further recites that "a planar surface of said web portion of each said reinforcing member is configured for surface-to-surface contact with a planar outer surface of a respective said radially outwardly projecting flange". The applied prior art does not disclose a reinforcing member having a planar surface, much less configured for surface-to-surface contact with a planar outer surface of a projecting flange. Instead, Straub shows the U-shaped clamping bar 50 only having ends contacting the closure and a curved portion contacting a corresponding curved portion of the clamping tongue 48.

Applicants' Claim 27 further recites a bridging member for spanning the longitudinal gap. It is unclear what element in Straub corresponds to a bridging member.

Applicants' Claim 29 recites a steel inner sleeve for placement within a smooth middle portion between the sealing lips within the sealing gasket. Figures 3 and 4 of Straub show an elastomer sealing device 32 having a smooth middle portion between the sealing lips. There is, however, no disclosure of a steel inner sleeve for placement within the middle portion.

Applicants' Claim 30 recites the radially projecting flanges including "through holes adjacent the free ends thereof". As discussed above, the strip being bent outwardly of the closure 46 of Straub does not have free ends, much less through holes adjacent the free ends. Claim 30 further recites a pair of reinforcing members including "a web portion having a planar surface with transverse through holes". The clamping bars 50 in Straub do not have a planar surface, much less a planar surface with transverse through holes. Claim 30 further recites a tensioning arrangement for interconnecting "free ends of the opposing radially outwardly projecting flanges". As discussed above, there are no free ends for the closure of Straub, much less a tensioning arrangement interconnecting the free ends of opposing projecting flanges.

For the above reasons, Claim 25-30 are believed distinguishable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above, the instant application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and action toward that end is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brian Tumm". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Brian R. Tumm

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